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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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TAGS: [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#)

AMGT, MG, BF

SUBJECT: CORRECTED: GCOB ACTIVATING "STATE OF PREPAREDNESS" AGAINST
SWINE FLU

REF: 09 NASSAU 274

1. (U) SUMMARY: The GCOB discussed measures to contain and prevent the spread of Swine Flu (H1N1) at air and sea ports of entry (POEs). GCOB officials reported no confirmed cases of Swine Flu; however, the Ministry of Health (MoH) is currently at 24/7 operational capacity and is in a "state of preparedness." Measures at POEs will include some form of quarantine and consultation with a national surveillance system for suspected/confirmed cases of the flu, although the MoH has yet to clarify the protocol for handling infected and potentially infected passengers. The GCOB is aware of the need to act quickly and intends to implement screening measures with minimal inconvenience to tourists. Post will convene an EAC April 29 to review tripwires and its Emergency Action Plan. END SUMMARY.

GCOB Engagement on Swine Flu

2. (U) On April 27 and 28, ConOff and EconOff attended meetings of officials from numerous GCOB agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), MoH, Ministry of Tourism and Aviation (MoTA), Airport Authority, Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA), Bahamas Hotel Association and National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to discuss the Swine Flu outbreak and its anticipated impact on tourism, immigration and aviation. All GCOB agencies have activated, or will shortly activate their pandemic response plan, according to the MoH. MoH is operating 24/7 and holding daily emergency meetings and press briefings as a part of its "elevated health and security" status. NEMA will coordinate the GCOB response and the Ministry of Health will lead the effort in Swine Flu prevention. MoH has activated its National Surveillance Advisory Body to track suspected and confirmed cases through a network of fifty (50) reporting sites dispersed throughout the country. MoH and MoTA will launch a public service announcement encouraging personal hygiene. The Bahamas Hotel Association has sent information to its 175 constituent hoteliers on the flu and has enacted its "hurricane" policy to return deposits to customers who no longer wish to travel.

Swine Flu in Abaco?

3. (U) There are no confirmed cases of swine flu as of 28 April 2009. However, the MoH announced it quarantined a group of Bahamian students and teachers recently returned from Mexico. According to press reports, at least two students reported flu-like symptoms upon return. Officials have not yet received lab results to determine whether the illness is the H1N1 swine flu.

Air POEs

¶4. (U) The GCOB is enacting several additional screening measures at Ports of Entry (POEs) to limit the potential for infection among incoming tourists and visitors:

-- MoT officials announced that all passengers at air and sea POEs will be required to fill out a screening form with questions related to their point of departure and places visited over the course of their travels. The screening form will be used as of April 29.

-- Signs will be posted in arrival terminals at all airports requesting passengers with flu-like symptoms report to a health desk or MoH health officer in the arrivals area.

-- Airport authorities in New Providence will direct passengers exhibiting symptoms to a nurses' station. There, nurses will ask passengers to put on a mask and then transport them to one of 40 community clinics in New Providence for further evaluation and testing. Inbound planes containing passengers exhibiting symptoms will be isolated upon arrival. All passengers will be required to wait until the National Surveillance Advisory Board and the Port Health Officer determine appropriate quarantine procedures.

¶5. (U) This policy applies to the airports on New Providence. MoH officials are still determining where to direct affected passengers at the Family Island airports.

¶6. (U) The GCOB has not determined whether tourists and visitors with confirmed cases of Swine Flu will be deported or put into long-term quarantine.

¶7. (U) The MoTA, in conjunction with the MoH, will utilize marina databases in order to spread word to private yachts about new

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procedures at POEs. The MoH will advertise a "hotline" number (1-242-502-4790) that tourists and residents can call to obtain information on swine flu and preventive measures.

Sea POEs

¶8. (U) The MoH is also working with the FCCA to determine whether cruise companies' pre-departure health screening measures are sufficient to avoid additional screening upon arrival in Nassau. To date, Royal Caribbean is the only company to have demonstrated sufficient pre-screening procedures for influenza symptoms. The FCCA is currently in contact with Carnival Cruise Lines and Disney Cruise Lines to assess their screening operations.

Cruises from Mexico

¶9. (U) According to the FCCA, the Carnival Cruise ship "Glory" is the only ship to regularly stop in Mexico before proceeding to Nassau. It is next expected into Port on May 6. The FCCA representative reported that there is talk of temporarily eliminating all Mexican ports of call in the ship's itinerary.

Turks and Caicos Islands

¶10. According to the Chief Medical Officer, there are no confirmed or suspected cases of swine flu in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Passengers arriving in Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) will be asked to fill out a questionnaire and may have their temperature taken. Seagoing passengers will only be asked to complete a questionnaire.

Comment

¶11. (SBU) The GCOB is fully engaged in efforts to monitor, contain

and prevent the spread of the swine flu into the country, and are keenly aware of the need to enact screening measures with minimal inconvenience and disruption to the normal tourist traffic. GCOB officials are disappointed at the EU's recent issuance of a travel warning that advises its citizens to postpone non-essential travel and are concerned that the USG will follow suit. Although the MoH and NEMA are actively working with international organizations and local agencies, there is no clearly defined quarantine plan in the event of mass infection. Post will convene an EAC April 29 to review tripwires and possible actions. Post sent out a warden message April 28 advising the American community the developing situation. Post is also currently updating its Emergency Action Plan to comply with Department recommendations.

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